

when we tell them that an entire class of human beings is not worthy of protection, when we deny human rights to the most innocent and vulnerable humans among us? We have to do better.

To my Democratic colleagues, I would say, if we cannot act today to secure justice and human rights for unborn human beings, let's at least stand for the great American tradition of freedom of conscience and protect the rights of doctors and nurses who decline to participate in abortions. Let's at least spare Americans who oppose the taking of innocent human life from having their tax dollars go to fund abortions. At the very, very least, we should be able to agree upon that.

As I said, I am saddened and disheartened that a major political party in this country made depriving unborn human rights as their defining cause, but their right to life will not be ignored.

While Democratic leaders may deny the humanity of the unborn, there are a lot of Americans out there—a lot of Americans—who recognize it. I have faith that sooner or later this country will live up to its founding promise and the best of its tradition and extend the protection of its laws to every human being, born and unborn.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to finish my remarks, roughly 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TEXAS LEGISLATURE

Mr. CORNYN. Well, just when you think you have seen it all, Mr. President, something new happens here in Washington, DC. All eyes are now on DC's newest asylum seekers, the members of the Texas House of Representatives, the Democratic Representatives.

But the only oppressive force that these men and women are facing is the expectation that they would actually do their jobs in the Texas Legislature, the job they campaigned for and were elected to do.

Following unsuccessful attempts to pass an election integrity bill during the regular legislative session earlier this year, Governor Abbott has now called a special session for the Texas Legislature to consider that and other matters. That special session kicked off last Thursday, but the chamber is already being held hostage by a minority of house members who are unwilling to do their job. The Democrats raised concerns about the current draft of the bill. Make no mistake. That is why the legislative process actually exists. That is why it is important that they be there and debate the issues and actually vote on the bill. The purpose, of course, is for all sides to be able to debate, potentially amend, and vote on legislation.

Yet, rather than do their jobs in Texas, yesterday, house Democrats abandoned both our State and the mil-

lions of Texans whom they represent and decamped to Washington, DC, when they were faced with the prospect of defeat. For better or for worse, the legislative process is all about arithmetic. You are not always going to win every debate you are involved in. That doesn't mean you leave the State and refuse to do your job, but that is exactly what they did. They got on two chartered jets—maskless and with at least one case of light beer—to come to Washington, DC.

The problem—and, really, what is so sad—is I don't think these legislators realize the irony of the situation. They are using their collective power as the minority party to stop a bill they oppose from becoming law. While doing so, they have come to Washington to try to convince the President and Senate Democrats to nuke the very Senate rule that protects the rights of the minority—in other words, you might say, a filibuster for me but not for thee. As a reminder, this is the second time they have denied the legislature a quorum this year.

I think it is pretty obvious that this was nothing more than a political stunt when these lawmakers skipped town with no plan as to when they would return to their jobs in Texas. Frankly, the Governor, under the Texas Constitution, can continue to call as many special sessions as he wishes and without limitation. So we all know how this will end. They will eventually go home. After the cameras leave and after the press loses interest in this political stunt, they will go home, and they will participate in the process.

It is telling that these Democrats in this house of representatives chose to race toward TV cameras in Washington rather than present their arguments in the legislature, and it is not without some risk to them. I am advised that they were on Federal property and referred to a website, which was actually a fundraising site, for their efforts. We all know there are limits—in fact, strict limits—on any fundraising on Federal property. So they may have crossed a line, unwittingly or not.

This is simply an embarrassing dereliction of their duty and a shameful political stunt, as I said. They can't win. So they are doing the equivalent of “I will take my ball and go home” or, in this case, “I am simply running away.” Texans standing up to a fight is part of who we are, even if you know, in the end, you may not prevail. Instead, they turned their backs, hopped on a private jet, and ran from this fight.

Like our Democratic colleagues in Congress, Texas State lawmakers have tried to create a false choice between voter access and election security. I think it boils down to this: We should be making it easier to vote and tougher to cheat, plain and simple. It is disingenuous and downright false to claim any effort to prevent fraud is a veiled attempt at voter suppression. We know that minority voters, voters of color,

voted at unprecedented levels in the 2020 election.

In my State, we had 66 percent of registered voters vote and the highest levels in history of African-American and Hispanic voters—so much for this idea that, somehow, the people who want to be able to vote can't vote even though we ordinarily have 2 weeks of early voting before the general election. We have mail-in ballots for people who are disabled, who are over 65, or who cannot—or otherwise will not—be in town on election day. Of course, we have election day voting as well. In 2020, we had 11.3 million Texans who cast their ballots—as I said, 66 percent of registered voters. The last time I was on the ballot, in 2014, we had 4.8 million voters—4.8 to 11.3 in 6 years alone. So believe me—there is robust voter participation, and nothing the Texas Legislature is considering will deny people their legitimate right to vote and ability to cast their votes, and that is appropriate that they should do so.

There are other additional items in the Governor's call for this special session, including things like bail reform and family violence prevention. Of course, by fleeing town and coming to Washington in this political stunt, the Democratic house members are abdicating their responsibility to deal with these other issues as well. It is not just about election law reform; it is about these other issues like bail reform and family violence prevention.

I believe firmly and am confident I am in the majority of my constituents, of my 29 million constituents, that they actually expect us, when we run for office and when we get elected, to show up for our jobs and not take part in a highly orchestrated and ethically dubious act of political theater.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON ZEYA NOMINATION

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Zeya nomination?

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) would have voted “yea.”